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#2 IN A TWELVE-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES

THE ETERNALS

Strange events have exposed a startling fact, kept alive through the centuries only by myth and superstition — man is not alone on the evolutionary chain! He has shared the planet with two species unknown to him! Now, in a sudden burst of violence, the Deviants have risen from their domain beneath the sea to challenge all humanity! But mankind has unexpected allies —

Stan Lee Presents:

THE ETERNALS!™

PETER B. GILLIS * SAL BUSCEMA * AL GORDON * JOE ROSEN * GEORGE ROUSSOS * RALPH MACCHIO * JIM SHOOTER
WRITER, PENCILER, INKER, LETTERER, COLORIST, EDITOR, PRESBYTER

ODDS INN

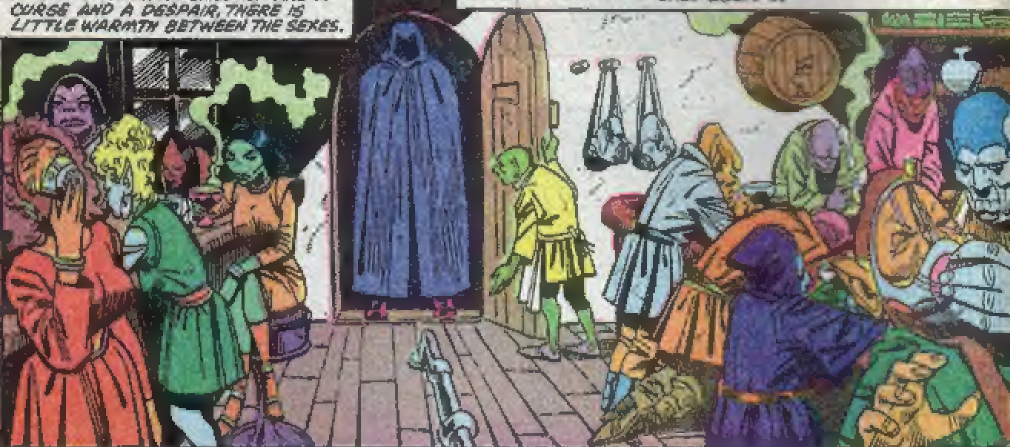
THE BACK ALLEYS OF THE CITY OF TOADS IN THE CONTINENT OF OLD LEMURIA BENEATH THE PACIFIC SEA-BOTTOM HAVE NOT CHANGED IN A THOUSAND YEARS--OR A HUNDRED THOUSAND. BITTER WINDS AND DIM LIGHT HAVE MIRRORED THE GLOOM AND BRUTALITY OF THEIR DENIZENS-- THE DEVIANTS.

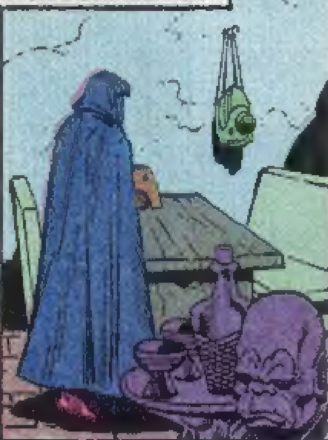
IN THEIR WORLD, A WORLD OF HORRIBLE GENETIC INSTABILITY, IT IS ACKNOWLEDGED WITH A BITTER LAUGH THAT NOTHING EVER REALLY CHANGES--AND THOSE WITH AMBITIONS TO CHANGE THINGS ARE FOOLS.

THE FOOL STRIDES UP TO THE TAVERN DOOR.

THE OLD PRIEST WRIT LARGE...!

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THERE IS THE TRADITIONAL RAIL THAT SEPARATES MALE FROM FEMALE. TO A RACE FOR WHOM CHILDREN ARE A CURSE AND A DESPAIR, THERE IS LITTLE WARMTH BETWEEN THE SEXES.
THERE IS, HOWEVER, A GRIM COMMON NEED FOR DRUGGED STUPOR FROM TIME TO TIME. AND FOR MANY, IT IS THEIR ONLY ESCAPE.


AND THE FOOL FINDS A SHADOWY CORNER--


--SITS, AND ORDERS.
A MUG OF ZAC. DARK.


HE DRINKS. AND THEN...
YOU ARE AS QUIET AS A SHADE RETURNED FROM THE DEAD, FRIEND.


ARE YOU NOT THEN THE COWARD WHO HAS SO RECENTLY RETURNED FROM DEATH--
--THE WARLORD KRO?


I AM KRO. AND YOU ARE THE COWARDS WHO STAYED BEHIND WHILE OUR EMPEROR COURTED DEATH--
--AND YOU ARE MY COWARDS.


SO TELL US HOW IT HAPPENED, KRO, HOW YOUR EMPEROR AND ALL HIS COURT PERISHED AT THE HANDS OF THE HATED ETERNALS--AND HOW YOU ALONE SURVIVED!
VERY WELL, THE TALE HAS ITS AMUSING PARTS.


"I WAS PRESENT WHEN OUR LATE EMPEROR BROTHER TODE PROPOUNDED HIS PLAN TO DESTROY THE ETERNALS FOREVER.
"IT WAS A MAD SCHEME, DOOMED TO FAILURE--BUT WHO WAS I TO CONTRADICT MY EMPEROR?


"WE INFILTRATED THE ETERNALS' PRINCIPAL HOME, THE MOUNTAIN-TOP CITY OF OLYMPIA WHILE THEY WERE AWAY.
"AND WHEN THEY RETURNED, ONE BY ONE, WE PLANTED BRAIN MINES ON THEM.


"WITH THEIR MINDS DEADENED, AND THEM POWERLESS, IT WAS TODE'S THOUGHT TO REDUCE THEM TO ATOMS--
"--THEN TO INHALE THOSE ATOMS, AND SO GAIN THEIR IMMORTALITY. MADNESS.


"BUT THROUGH THE INTERVENTION OF THE HUMAN HERO IRON MAN, THE ETERNALS WERE FREED, AND THE DEVIANTS VANQUISHED!*
*IRON MAN ANNUAL #7--R.M.


"AT THE INSISTENCE OF VALKIN, HEAD OF THE POLAR ETERNALS, WE WERE TO HAVE OUR ATOMIC STRUCTURES ENCODED INTO A GIANT STONE BLOCK--
"--AND THAT BLOCK CONSIGNED TO THE DEPTHS OF SPACE. AND THAT IS JUST WHAT HAPPENED.


"BUT IN THE TIME BEFORE VALKIN'S DECREE WAS EXECUTED, THENA, DAUGHTER OF THE PRIME ETERNAL--GREAT ZURAS HIMSELF, UNLOCKED THE DOOR TO MY CELL AND GAVE ME MY FREEDOM."

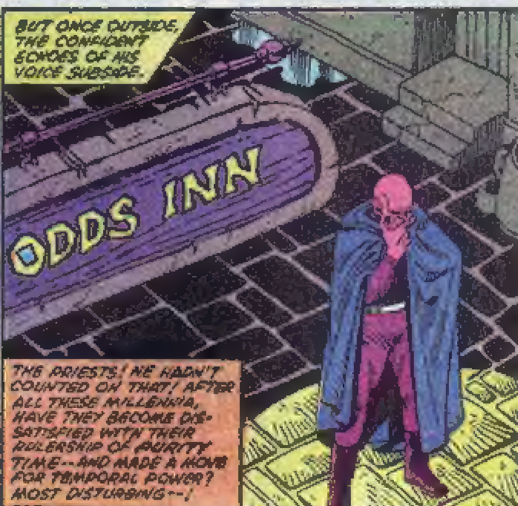
YOU EXPECT US TO BELIEVE THAT SHE, WHO IS NOW LEADER OF THE ETERNALS ON EARTH--FREED YOU?
I TOLD YOU IT WAS AMUSING! YOU SEE. A SIMILAR-LOOKING ANCESTOR OF MINE, ALSO NAMED KRO, ONCE HAD A BRIEF ROMANCE WITH THIS THENA.
AND SINCE THOSE ACCURSED IMMORTALS OFTEN FORGET WHAT CENTURY THEY'RE IN, SHE THOUGHT I WAS HER LONG-DEAD BELOVED!
SHE WAS SMITTEN ENOUGH WITH ROMANCE TO GIVE ME THIS!
THEY CALL IT AN EMPATHIC BONDING-CRYSTAL! SEE HOW IT SHINES!
YOU'RE THE DEVIL HIMSELF, LORD KRO! POOR, POOR LOVESICK THENA--!
POOR LITTLE ETERNAL GIRL! MY HEART BREAKS FOR HER!
ENOUGH. NOW YOU MUST TELL ME HOW LEMURIA HAS FARED IN MY ABSENCE. WHAT IS HAPPENING? HOW IS THE POWER VACUUM BEING FILLED SINCE TODE'S DEATH? IS THERE TALK OF REVOLUTION AMONG THE LOWER CLASSES?
IT IS MOST STRANGE, LORD KRO. MOST CONTRARY TO EXPECTATIONS.
"THE PALACE IS DARK, AND ITS MINIONS NO LONGER RUN ROUGHSHOD OVER US.
TODE IS DEAD
"BUT ASIDE FROM A FEW EXPRESSIONS OF RELIEF, THINGS ARE MORE QUIET NOW THAN EVER BEFORE."
THIS IS MOST DISTURBING. I HAD HOPED TO RETURN TO LEMURIA AND BRING PEACE TO A CHAOTIC LAND--AND THEN HAVE THEM GRATEFULLY GIVE ME THE CROWN. BUT WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE KEPT THINGS QUIET?
WHISPERS, LORD KRO... HUSHED VOICES THAT MURMUR THIS... THE PRIESTS ARE MOVING.


THE PRIESTS? THE PRIESTS--!
YOU LEAVE THE PRIESTS TO ME. NOW WHAT ABOUT OUR MILITARY FORCES?

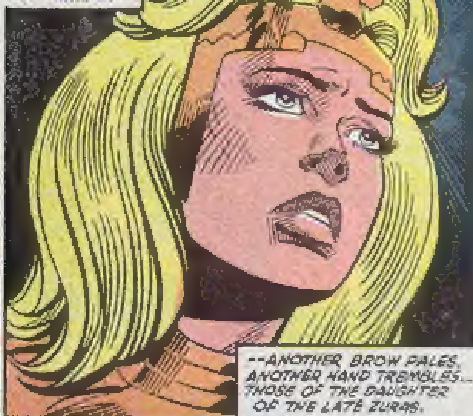

EVERYTHING HAS BEEN IN ORDER SINCE BROTHER TODE'S DEATH WAS ANNOUNCED. THEY ARE READY TO MOVE AT A WORD.
GOOD. AND THE--OTHERS?


ANQLAU OVER THERE HAS UNITED THEM. THEY ARE ALL READY.
THE FEMALE DEVIANT NODS ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLY FROM ACROSS THE ROOM.

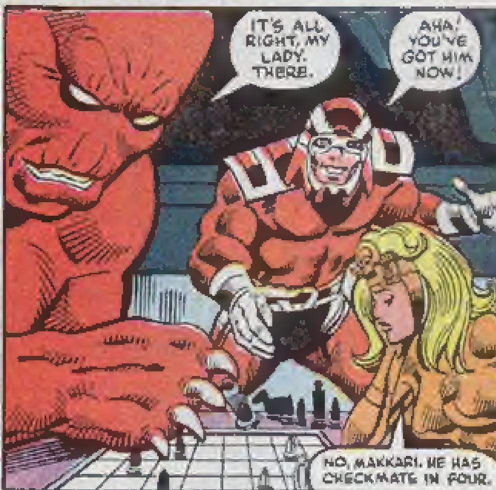

EXCELLENT. NOW THERE ARE THINGS I MUST DO. I WILL CONTACT YOU AGAIN.
BUT KNOW THIS...BEFORE LONG, THE CONTROL OF THE DEVIANTS SHALL BE IN OUR HANDS!


BUT ONCE OUTSIDE, THE CONFIDENT ECHOES OF HIS VOICE SUBSIDE.
ODDS INN
THE PRIESTS! HE HADN'T COUNTED ON THAT! AFTER ALL THESE MILLENNIA, HAVE THEY BECOME DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR RULERSHIP OF PURITY TIME--AND MADE A MOVE FOR TEMPORAL POWER? MOST DISTURBING--!

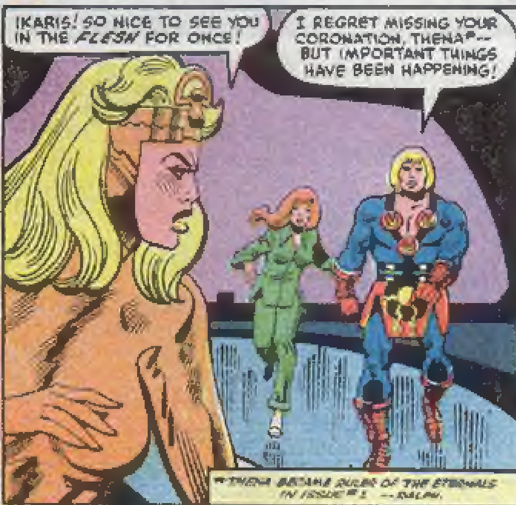

HIS HAND SHAKES A BIT AND HIS BROW PALES AS HE DRAWS THE CRYSTAL FROM HIS BREAST--AND HE MOUTHS ONE PHRASE--
THENA--! AFTER ALL THESE THOUSANDS OF YEARS...


AND HALFWAY ACROSS THE WORLD, IN THE ETERNAL CITY OF OLYMPIA--
--ANOTHER BROW PALES, ANOTHER HAND TREMBLES-- THOSE OF THE DAUGHTER OF THE LATE ZURAS.


I SEE HOW YOU CAN BEAT HIM IN NINE MOVES, THENA! NO, EIGHT!
MAKKARI, PLEASE! I MAY BE USED TO YOUR DISTRACTIONS-- BUT KARKAS IS NOT.

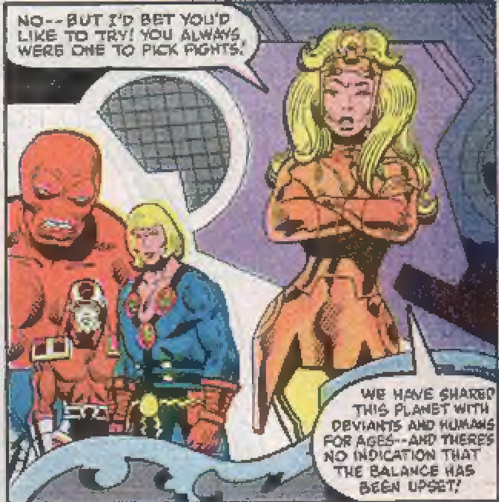

IT'S ALL RIGHT, MY LADY. THERE.
AHA! YOU'VE GOT HIM NOW!
NO, MAKKARI. HE HAS CHECKMATE IN FOUR.


THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG, MY LADY-- WORSE THAN MERE DISTRACTIONS. YOU PLAYED THE GAME TO FORCE YOURSELF TO LOSE.
THAT MAY BE SO, KARKAS...


IKARIS! SO NICE TO SEE YOU IN THE FLESH FOR ONCE!
I REGRET MISSING YOUR CORONATION, THENA*-- BUT IMPORTANT THINGS HAVE BEEN HAPPENING!
*THENA BECAME RULER OF THE ETERNALS IN ISSUE #1. --RALPH.


I HAVE BEEN OBSERVING THE DEVIANTS-- PENETRATING THEIR STRONGHOLDS!
THEY ARE UP TO SOMETHING HUGE AND DREADFUL-- AND THEY ARE NEARLY READY TO MAKE THEIR MOVE!

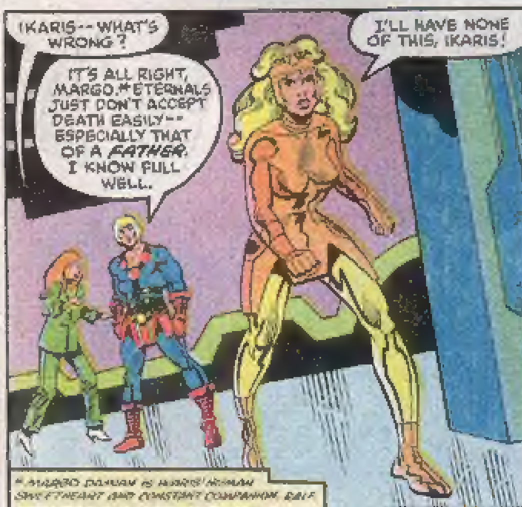

BUT--WEREN'T NEARLY ALL THE DEVIANTS IN THAT STONE BLOCK CAST INTO SPACE?
THAT INFORMATION WAS FOR THE CONSUMPTION OF OUR HUMAN FRIENDS, THE AVENGERS!* WE DECIMATED THEIR RULING CLASS, TRUE...
YOU WERE BROUGHT UP IN LEMURIA, KARKAS, BEFORE TRANSFERRING YOUR LOYALTY TO THE ETERNALS... WOULD YOUR ENTIRE *RACE* FIT INTO OLYMPIA--AND COULD WE IMPRISON THEM ALL?
*AVENGERS # 248--MAC-KARRI.


NO--BUT I'D BET YOU'D LIKE TO TRY! YOU ALWAYS WERE ONE TO PICK FIGHTS!
WE HAVE SHARED THIS PLANET WITH DEVIANTS AND HUMANS FOR AGES--AND THERE'S NO INDICATION THAT THE BALANCE HAS BEEN UPSET!


BUT IT HAS! THE DEVIANTS HAVE INFILTRATED THE HUMANS' ENTERTAINMENT FORMS--
I HEARD! AND ARE WE TO GO TO WAR FOR THE PURITY OF *PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING*? BECAUSE YOU HAD A BRIEF STRUGGLE WITH THEM BELOW NEW YORK CITY?* POOR IKARIS!
*ISSUE #1 --RALF

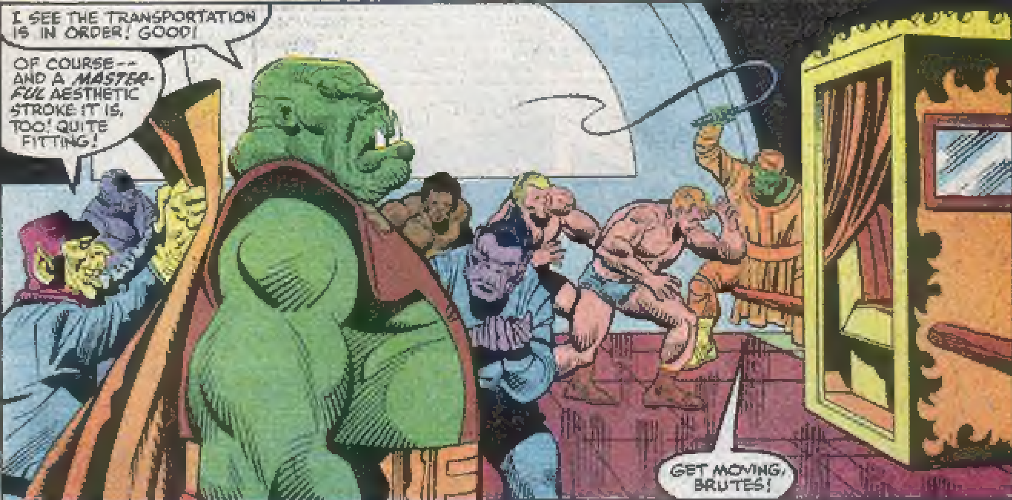

THENA--YOU'RE LETTING YOUR GRIEF FOR YOUR FATHER ZURAS OVERWHELM YOU WITH BITTERNESS. LIFE GOES ON AMID CHANGE, EVEN FOR ETERNALS.


AND I SUPPOSE IT'S *CHANGE* TO RECREATE THE DAYS WHEN YOU AND YOUR POLAR ETERNAL FRIENDS RAN AROUND THE PLANET SMASHING DEVIANTS FOR THE FUN OF IT AND CAUSING UNTOLD CARNAGE!
THOSE DAYS ARE OVER TOO!

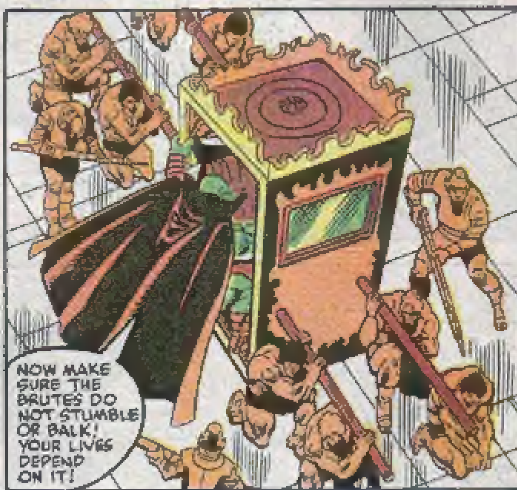

IKARIS--WHAT'S WRONG?
I'LL HAVE NONE OF THIS, IKARIS!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, MARGO.* ETERNALS JUST DON'T ACCEPT DEATH EASILY--ESPECIALLY THAT OF A *FATHER*. I KNOW FULL WELL..

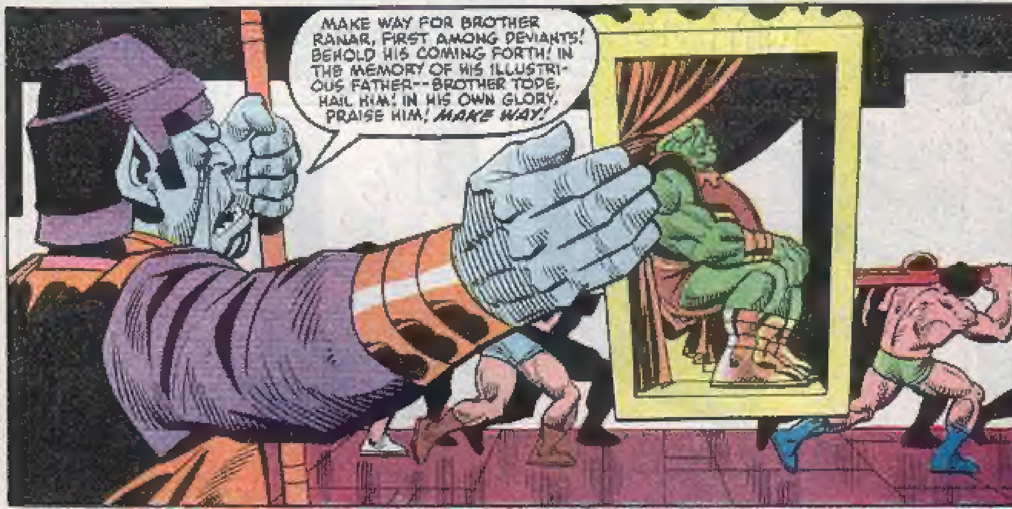

BUT WHEN SHE IS OUT OF SIGHT OF THE OTHERS...
KRO--KRO! OF ALL THE PEOPLE TO FILL THE VOID IN MY LIFE, YOU'RE THE *LAST* ONE I WANTED--!
BLAST YOU, KRO--!

AND IN THE DEVIANTS' CITY OF TOADS...
LET US OUT OF HERE! WHY WON'T YOU LET US GO!
GIVE IT UP, JEFF! THESE MONSTERS WON'T EVEN TALK TO US--EXPLAIN WHY THEY CAPTURED US! YOU THINK THEY'RE GONNA RELEASE US?
THERE'S GOT TO BE AN EXPLANATION WHY THEY RAIDED OUR GYM-- MAYBE THEY WANTED TO STUDY THE BEST SPECIMENS--?
STUDY? WHY NOT EAT?
HUMANS! BACK FROM THE BARS!
THEY CAN TALK!
WE'RE NOT IDIOTS, HUMAN! NOW COME ALONG!
WHO--WHAT'S THAT?
SILENCE!
EVERYTHING IS READY FOR YOUR SUPREME MOMENT, BROTHER RANAR!
I EXPECT NOTHING ELSE, SLIME! CAREFUL WITH THE BELT!

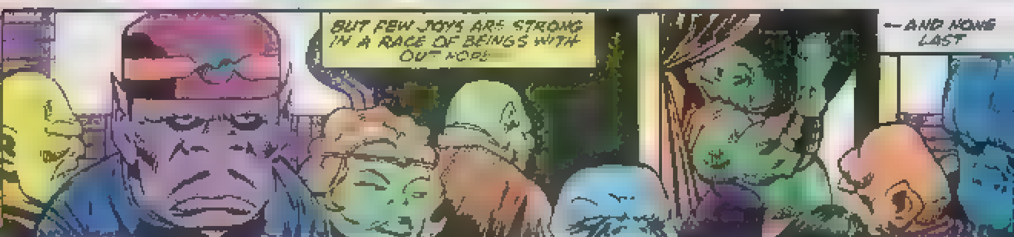

I SEE THE TRANSPORTATION IS IN ORDER! GOOD!
OF COURSE-- AND A *MASTERFUL* AESTHETIC STROKE IT IS, TOO! QUITE FITTING!
GET MOVING, BRUTES!

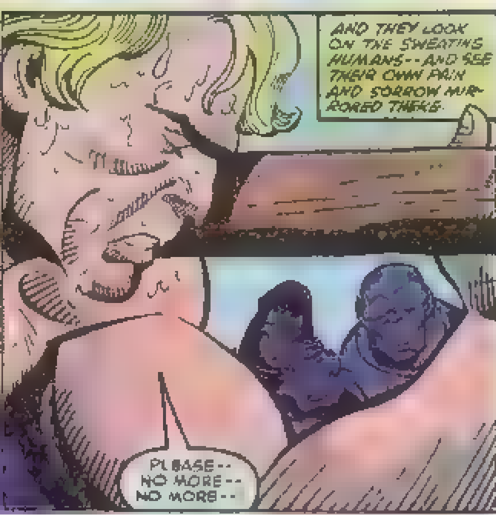

YOU HAVE DONE WELL! YOU SHALL BE REMEMBERED IN MY HOUR OF GLORY!
BROTHER RANAR IS NOBILITY ITSELF!


NOW MAKE SURE THE BRUTES DO NOT STUMBLE OR BALK! YOUR LIVES DEPEND ON IT!

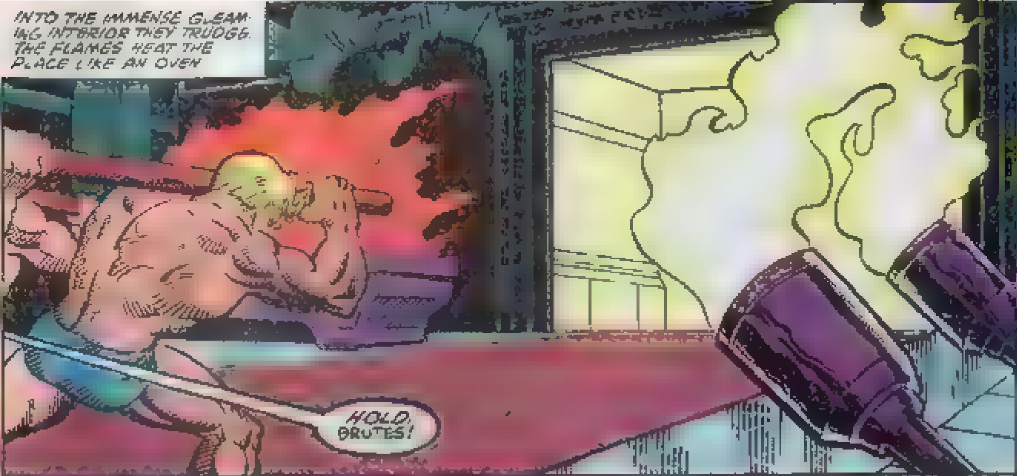

MAKE WAY FOR BROTHER RANAR, FIRST AMONG DEVIANTS! BEHOLD HIS COMING FORTH! IN THE MEMORY OF HIS ILLUSTRIOUS FATHER--BROTHER TODE, HAIL HIM! IN HIS OWN GLORY, PRAISE HIM! *MAKE WAY!*

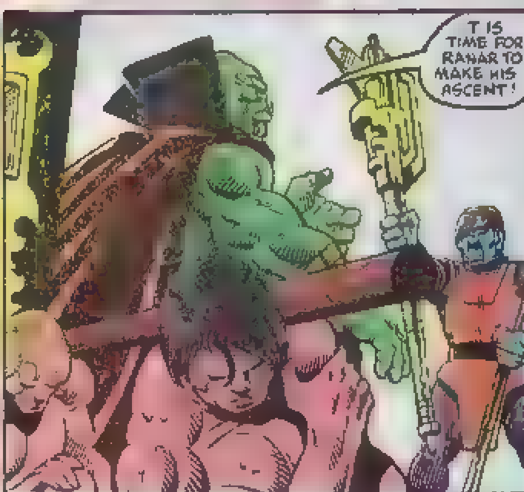
RANAR! RANAR! THE CROWDS SHOUT AS THEY PROCEED THROUGH LEMURIA-- THE BANNERS WAVE-- SHOUTS OF "OUR NEXT RULER!" PIERCE THE AIR





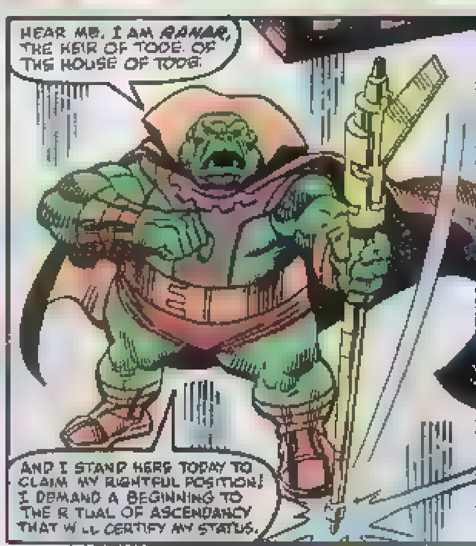



INTO THE IMMENSE GLEAM-ING INTERIOR THEY TRUDGE. THE FLAMES HEAT THE PLACE LIKE AN OVEN
HOLD, BRUTES!

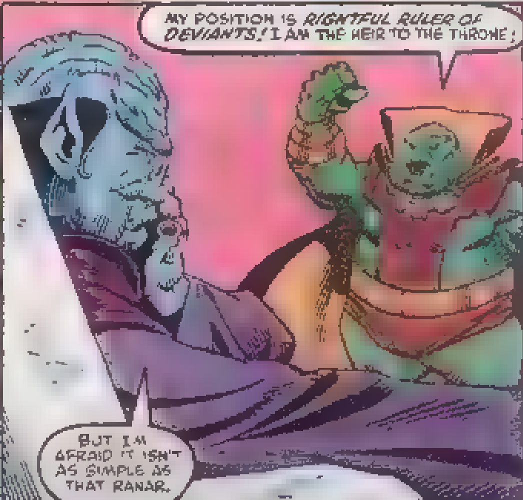

T IS TIME FOR RANAR TO MAKE HIS ASCENT!

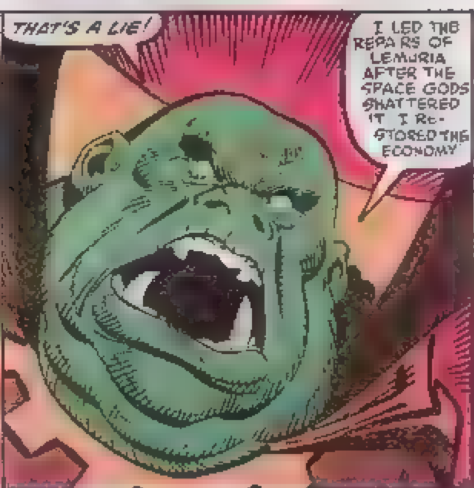
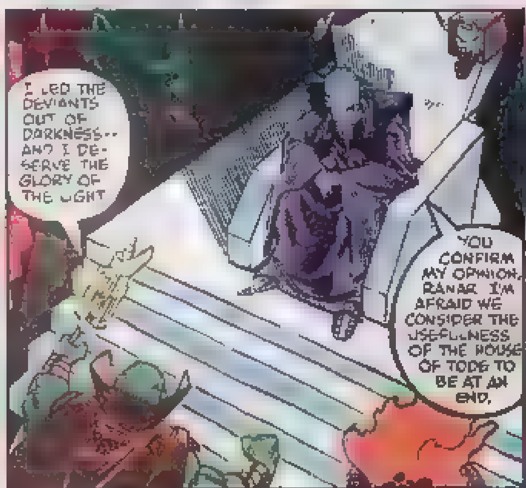
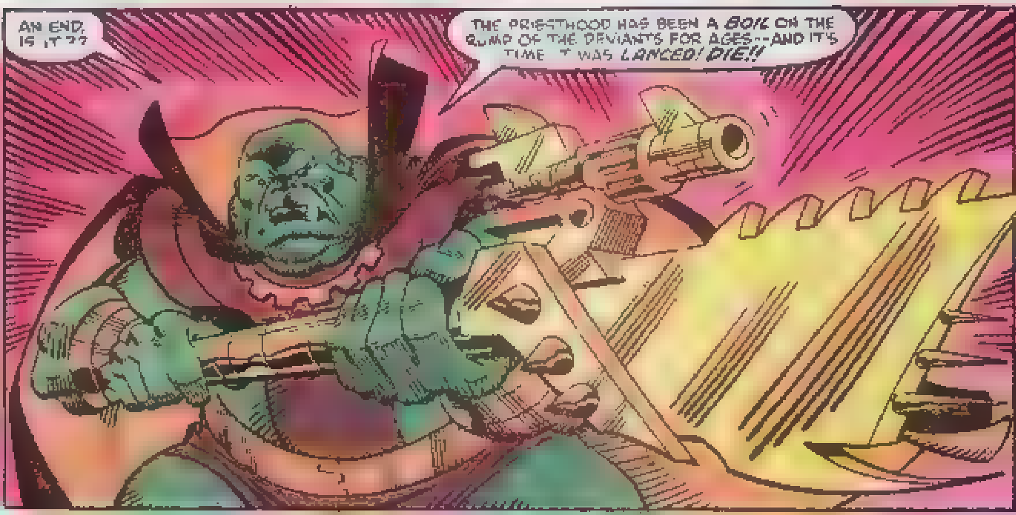

FROM HERE, NONE SAVE RANAR MAY GO--FOR IT IS THE HOLY OF HOLIES!

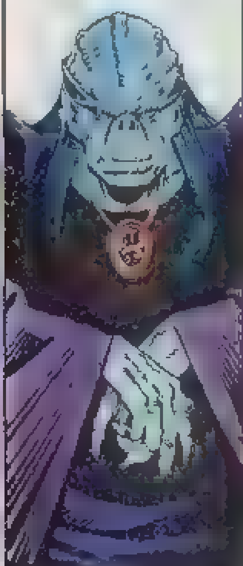

THAT IS ALL I NEED THE HUMANS FOR. GUARDS
VERY WELL, [redacted] RANAR!
NO. NOOOOO--


HEAR ME. I AM RANAR, THE HEIR OF TODE, OF THE HOUSE OF TODE.
AND I STAND HERE TODAY TO CLAIM MY RIGHTFUL POSITION! I DEMAND A BEGINNING TO THE RITUAL OF ASCENDANCY THAT WILL CERTIFY MY STATUS.

AND WHAT STATUS MIGHT THAT BE RANAR, CHILD OF THE GODS?
SPEAK: -THE PRIESTLORD *GHAUR* ATTENDS YOUR EVERY WORD
I *SHALL*, LORD


MY POSITION IS RIGHTFUL RULER OF DEVIANTS! I AM THE HEIR TO THE THRONE!
BUT I'M AFRAID IT ISN'T AS SIMPLE AS THAT RANAR.

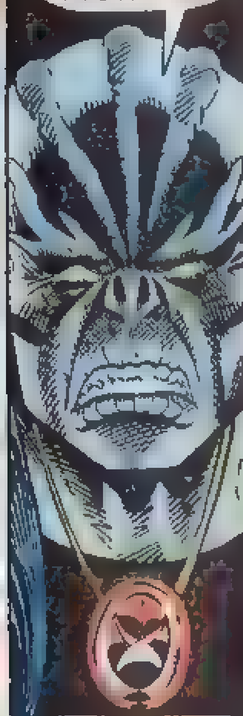
YOUR ARE ONLY HEIR BECAUSE YOUR PROGENITOR PERISHED AT THE HANDS OF THE ETERNALS
YOU ARE ALSO A BLUSTERING MORON

THAT'S A LIE!
I LED THE REPAIRS OF LEMURIA AFTER THE SPACE GODS SHATTERED IT. I RESTORED THE ECONOMY

I LED THE DEVIANTS OUT OF DARKNESS-- AND I DESERVE THE GLORY OF THE LIGHT
YOU CONFIRM MY OPINION, RANAR. I'M AFRAID WE CONSIDER THE USEFULNESS OF THE HOUSE OF TODE TO BE AT AN END.

AN END, IS IT??
THE PRIESTHOOD HAS BEEN A BOIL ON THE RUMP OF THE DEVIANTS FOR AGES--AND IT'S TIME IT WAS LANCED! DIE!!


YOU KNOW, DON'T YOU, RANAR, THAT I WAS PRESENT AT YOUR BIRTH! I WATCHED AS YOUR HUGE BULK TORE YOUR MOTHER TO SHREDS AS YOU CAME INTO THIS WORLD.


I SAW YOU AS YOU WERE-- A CLUMSY MURDERER BEFORE YOU EVEN TOOK YOUR FIRST BREATH... AND I WAS INTERESTED
WHAT? WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH--


I STUDIED YOUR GENETIC CODE OF COURSE - GOT TO KNOW THE INS AND OUTS OF IT QUITE WELL


I NEVER DID FIND OUT HOW YOU GOT TO BE SO STUPID OF COURSE-- WITH STUPIDITY THE GODS THEMSELVES STRUGGLE IN VAIN
SHUT UP, YOU OLD--

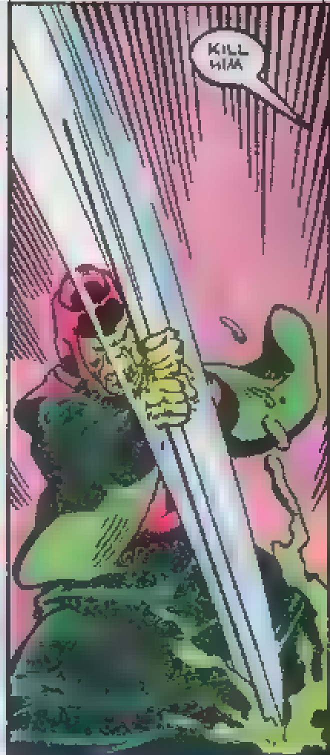

BUT I DISCOVERED *OTHER THINGS*

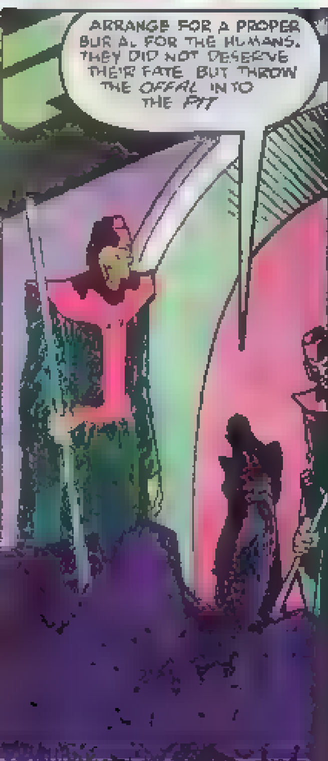

I DISCOVERED SUCH THINGS AS WOULD MAKE YOU WEEP, BROTHER RANAR

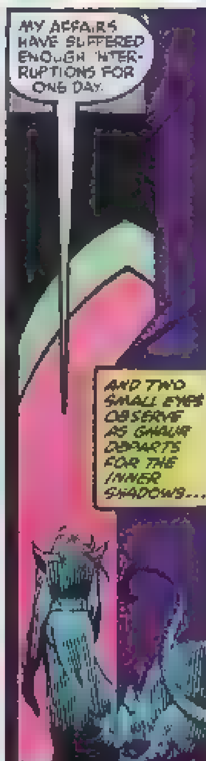

--WEEP SUCH TEARS AS ONE WOULD NEVER SEE AGAIN...

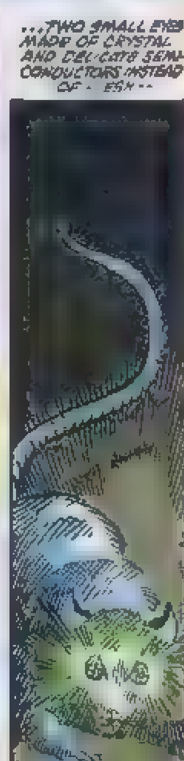

TEARS AS SOLID AS DEATH ITSELF

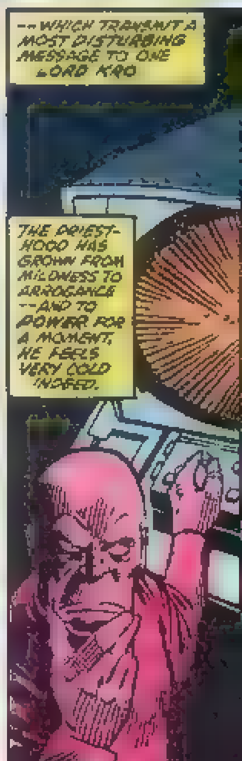

AND A RULER CAPABLE OF TEARS-- ESPECIALLY TEARS LIKE THESE--IS NOT OF THE STUFF OF WHICH DEVIANT RULERS ARE MADE.
I WISH YOU PEACE, CHILD OF THE GODS.
MMMP NGNGK


KILL HIM


ARRANGE FOR A PROPER BURIAL FOR THE HUMANS. THEY DID NOT DESERVE THEIR FATE. BUT THROW THE OFFAL INTO THE PIT


MY AFFAIRS HAVE SUFFERED ENOUGH INTERRUPTIONS FOR ONE DAY.
AND TWO SMALL EYES OBSERVE AS GHAUR DEPARTS FOR THE INNER SHADOWS...


...TWO SMALL EYES MADE OF CRYSTAL AND DELICATE SEMI-CONDUCTORS INSTEAD OF --


--WHICH TRANSMIT A MOST DISTURBING MESSAGE TO ONE LORD KRO
THE PRIESTHOOD HAS GROWN FROM MILDNESS TO ARROGANCE --AND TO POWER. FOR A MOMENT, HE FEELS VERY COLD INDEED.







BATTLESHIP MANUFACTURE REQUIRES A DEGREE OF CONCENTRATION'

BATTLESHIP? BUT -WHY ARE YOU GOING TO WAR NOW--WHEN YOU DIDN'T WHEN THE DEVIANTS INVADED OLYMPIA ITSELF SOME MONTHS AGO.*

BECAUSE THIS TIME, MARGO, THEY ATTACKED HUMANKIND-- YOUR PEOPLE WHO DON'T POSSESS THE ETERNALS' IN-BORN POWERS TO DEFEND THEMSELVES.

*SEE AVENGERS #246 E.M.

AND I COULD NEVER ALLOW THOSE YOU CARE FOR TO COME TO HARM --

IKARIS! LOOK OUT!

YOU TOOK YOUR HANDS OFF THE CONTROLS WITHOUT THE TELEKINETIC HALT COMMAND, YOU BIG--YIPE!

GREAT ZURAS--!

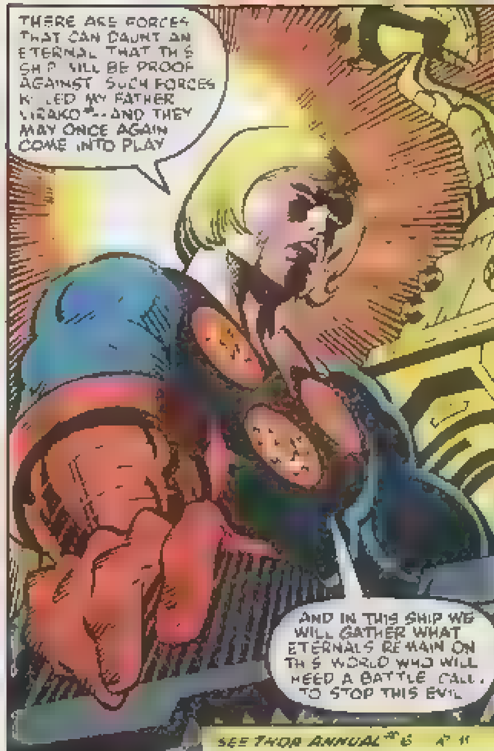
WORKING SWIFTLY, A FRANTIC MAKKARI BRINGS HIS OWN LEVITATIONAL ABILITIES INTO PLAY TO AID HIS FRIENDS. .

DEFLECT, YOU IDIOT HUNK OF MACHINERY! WHY DON'T YOU-- GOT IT!

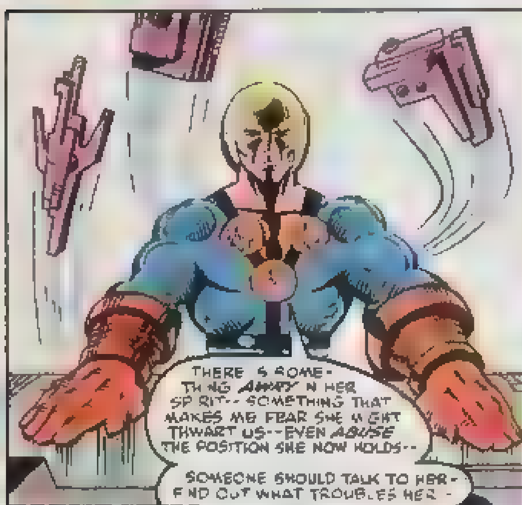
YOU KNOW, YOU TWO SOMETIMES I THINK, WHEN YOU'RE KISSING, SOMEONE COULD DROP A CELESTIAL ON YOU AND YOU WOULDN'T NOTICE--

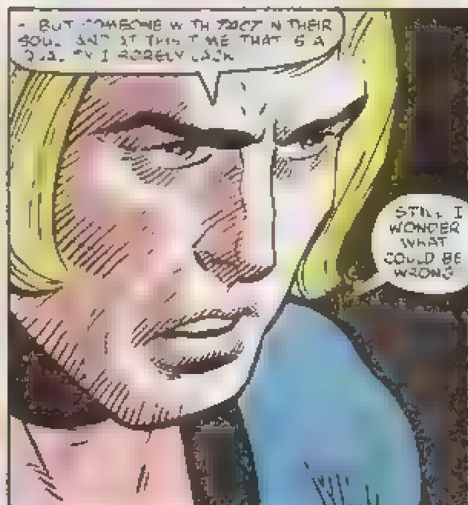
--IKARIS? MARGO?


BUT NOW THE CONSTRUCTION MUST PROCEED, MARGO! ALL OUR FATES MAY WELL BE TIED TO THE STRENGTH AND POWER OF THIS SHIP!
BUT WHAT CAN ETERNALS NEED OF A SHIP?

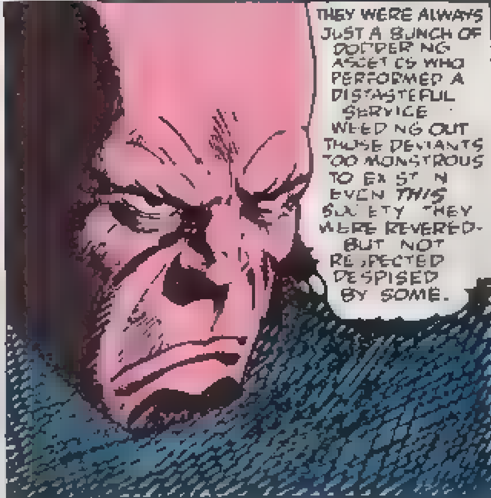

THERE ARE FORCES THAT CAN DAUNT AN ETERNAL THAT THIS SHIP WILL BE PROOF AGAINST. SUCH FORCES KILLED MY FATHER VIRAKO*--AND THEY MAY ONCE AGAIN COME INTO PLAY.
AND IN THIS SHIP WE WILL GATHER WHAT ETERNALS REMAIN ON THIS WORLD WHO WILL HEED A BATTLE CALL, TO STOP THIS EVIL.
*SEE THOR ANNUAL #6


I ALMOST HATE TO MENTION THIS, IKARIS--BUT THENA IS, AT LEAST NOMINALLY, OUR LEADER. WE SHOULD OBTAIN HER PERMISSION FOR THIS ESCAPADE.
YOU ARE RIGHT--BUT SHE WORRIES ME, MAKKARI--

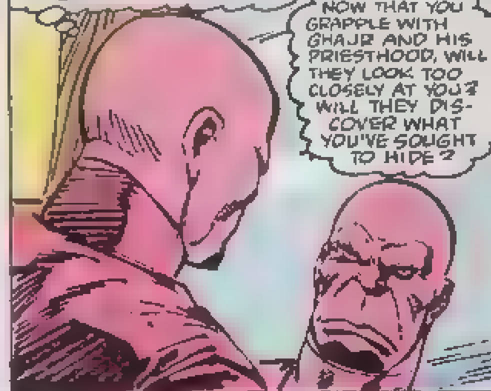

THERE IS SOMETHING AWRY IN HER SPIRIT--SOMETHING THAT MAKES ME FEAR SHE MIGHT THWART US--EVEN ABUSE THE POSITION SHE NOW HOLDS--
SOMEONE SHOULD TALK TO HER--FIND OUT WHAT TROUBLES HER--


--BUT SOMEONE WITH TACT IN THEIR SOUL. AND AT THIS TIME THAT IS A QUALITY I SORELY LACK.
STILL, I WONDER WHAT COULD BE WRONG.

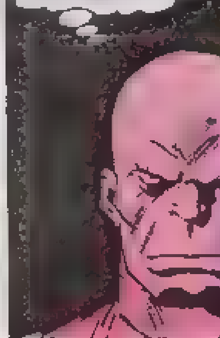

AT THAT MOMENT, IN THE DOMAIN OF THE DEVIANTS
THIS IS NOT GOING AS I WISH IT TO. IT WAS TO BE A SWIFT, CLEAN COUP, WITH ONLY FOOLS AND DEGENERATES TO OPPOSE MY ASSUMPTION OF POWER. INSTEAD-- THE PRIESTS!


THEY WERE ALWAYS JUST A BUNCH OF DODDERING ASCETICS WHO PERFORMED A DISTASTEFUL SERVICE WEEDING OUT THOSE DEVIANTS TOO MONSTROUS TO EXIST IN EVEN THIS SOCIETY. THEY WERE REVERED-- BUT NOT RESPECTED. DESPISED BY SOME.


AND YOU, WARLORD KRO--YOU WHO HAVE ALWAYS STOOD IN THE PROTECTIVE SHADOW OF THE THRONE.
HAS YOUR FOLLY CAUGHT UP WITH YOU?
YOU ONLY SOUGHT THE THRONE WHEN IT WOULD BE A SURE THING--AND NOW THAT YOU'RE COMMITTED IT BECOME VERY UNSURE INDEED. AND YOU ALONE KNOW HOW MUCH YOU RISK!

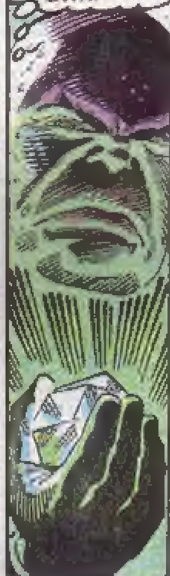

THEY WOULD TEAR YOU APART IF THEY KNEW-- THAT YOU HAVE THE VERY THING TODE LUSTED AFTER --SEEMING IMMORTALITY. AND THAT IS WHY YOU NEVER DREW TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO YOURSELF.
NOW THAT YOU GRAPPLE WITH GHAUR AND HIS PRIESTHOOD, WILL THEY LOOK TOO CLOSELY AT YOU? WILL THEY DISCOVER WHAT YOU'VE SOUGHT TO HIDE?

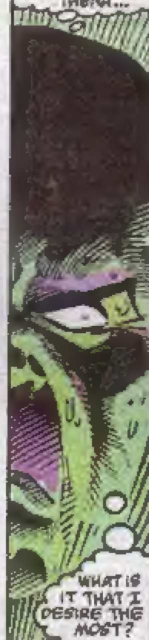

YOU CAN STILL BACK OUT. YOU KNOW AS KING UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, YOU'LL HAVE TO WATCH YOUR STEP-- PLAY THE PART--STRIKING OUT AT THE ETERNALS IN WORD AND DEED TO MATCH YOUR SUBJECTS' HATRED AND FEAR FOR THEM. IN OTHER WORDS, TO BE A PRISONER OF THE OFFICE.

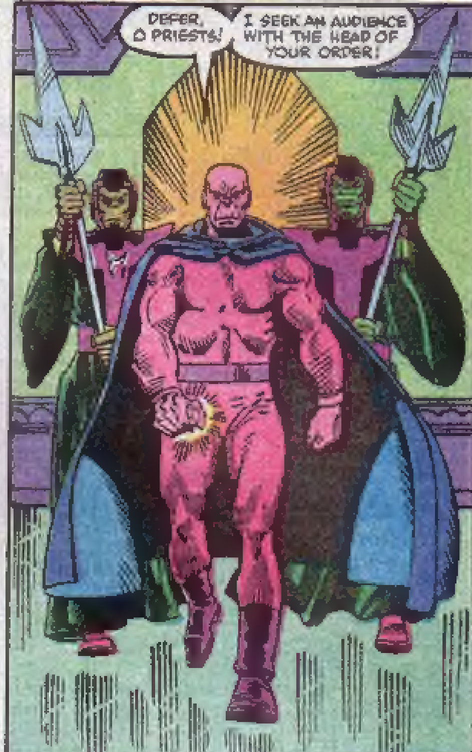

BUT IT ALL PALES BESIDE THE POWER, DOESN'T IT, MY LORD KRO? THE ABSOLUTE POWER OF THE OFFICE? DESPITE YOUR CAUTION, ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WANT?
TO WIELD THE HAMMER OF POWER ON THE ANVIL OF THE WORLD, AND SHAPE THE FUTURE AS YOU SEE FIT. YES!


IF ONLY I COULD BE SURE.


AND SO IT COMES TO THIS--THE CHOICE. WILL I MASTER MY APPREHENSIONS AND ASSUME MY PLACE AS LEADER OF THE DEVIANTS?


THIS THRONE WILL DEMAND THAT I FOREVER GLANCE BACK AT THE PRIESTS... I'LL NO LONGER HAVE THE SAFETY, THE FREEDOM... MY LIFE WILL NEVER BE MY OWN.


AND IT MEANS THAT I MAY BE FORCED TO GO TO WAR AGAINST THENA... OF ALL BEINGS... THENA...
WHAT IS IT THAT I DESIRE THE MOST?


DEFER, O PRIESTS!
I SEEK AN AUDIENCE WITH THE HEAD OF YOUR ORDER!


IF THERE IS SOMETHING I CAN DO FOR YOU, MY DEAR EX-WARLORD--I AM YOUR SERVANT.
WE ARE ALL SERVANTS, MY LORD GHAUR--IT IS BUT THE CHOICE OF MASTERS WHICH TURNS THE WORLD AROUND.


AND SINCE--MY FORTUITOUS RETURN, I HAVE HEARD RUMORS THAT THE REMAINS OF THE NOBILITY HAVE CAUSED SOME GRIEF TO THE SACRED PRIESTHOOD--DENIED YOU NEEDED AID AND COMPLIANCE!
NATURALLY, I WAS SHOCKED BY THIS, AND SO I THOUGHT...


SO YOU THOUGHT THE AGONIES OF RULERSHIP MIGHT BEST BE MINISTERED TO BY ONE SUCH AS YOU--IS THAT IT, KRO?
YOUR GRACE.





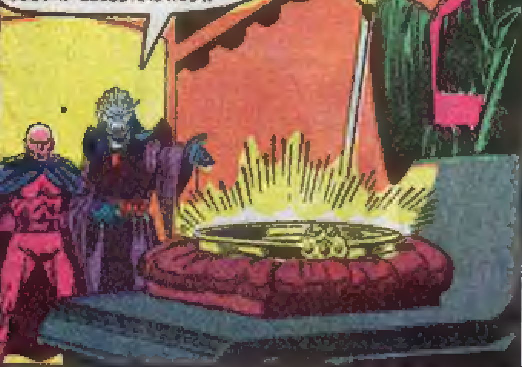
--FRIENDS FOR SUCH A LONG TIME?




OF COURSE. BUT THERE SHOULD BE SOME JUSTIFICATION FOR YOUR ELEVATION, LORD KRO, THAT CAN BE PRESENTED TO LEMURIA AT LARGE--


--LEST THEY THINK IT WAS OUR AMITY THAT UNDULY INFLUENCED THE DECISION...
...OLD FRIEND.

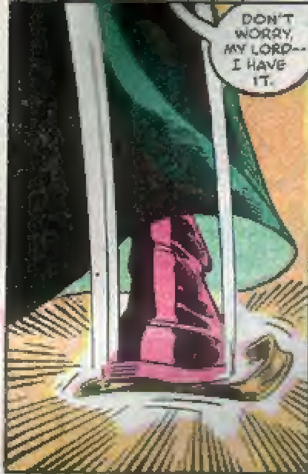

I, ALONE, OF ALL LIVING DEVIANTS WAS PRESENT, LORD GHAUR, WHEN ZURAS, RULER OF ALL THE ETERNALS, DIED. ZURAS WAS A MIGHTY BEING OF MANY SECRETS, YOU'LL AGREE. AND MANY SECRETS WERE REVEALED IN THAT CATASTROPHIC BURST--
--THAT ARE IMPORTANT FOR A RULER OF THE DEVIANTS TO KNOW.


YOUR ARGUMENTS WERE ALWAYS WEIGHTY AND WELL THOUGHT OUT, KRO. UPON THE ALTAR STANDS THE CIRCLET OF THE ASCENDANT, WORN BY EMPERORS FROM BEFORE THE TIME OF THE SCOURGE OF THE SECOND CELESTIAL HOST.


I CHARGE YOU, IF YOU WOULD LEAD THE DEVIANTS TO THEIR DESTINY, TO BEAR ITS HEAVY WEIGHT UPON YOUR BROW.
IT IS A BURDEN I WILL STRIVE MIGHTILY TO BEAR, MY--


OOH! I MUST HAVE STUMBLED--!
IDIOT! WHAT ARE YOU--


CURSE THESE NEW BOOTS!
THE CIRCLET!









AND IN THE ALLEYS OF LEMURIA, THE WIND STILL BLOWS, THE GLOOM STILL SITS, AND ONE MIGHT STILL THINK--







NEXT ISSUE: THE STRATEGY OF SUICIDE!